

Conversion of Mrs. Louise Victor

From various newspapers, December, 1900.

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San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco, California), 18 dec 1900, p. 5: **FEARS SEPARATION FROM HER HUSBAND IN DEATH. Mrs. Louise Victor to Become a Proselyte to the Jewish Faith in Chicago.** CHICAGO, December 17.—Mrs. Louise Victor of 3737 Vincennes avenue, widow of Solomon Victor and hitherto a believer in the Protestant faith, will become a proselyte to the Jewish belief by open confession next Saturday at the Temple B'nai Sholom, corner of Twenty-sixth street and Indiana avenue. The admission of Mrs. Victor into the faith of her late husband was for a long time refused by Rabbi Messing of the Temple B'nai Sholom, who feared she would suffer from the prejudice that might be aroused by her action. Her request was finally granted upon the extraordinary plea that the applicant feared, if she failed to gain admission to his faith, she would be separated from her husband after her death. So great was her love for him, it was represented to the rabbi by her friend, Mrs. Kahn, with whom she has her home, that rejection by the rabbi would doom her to perpetual misery in life and dread of spiritual isolation thereafter. Rabbi Messing decided to give her two months to consider the matter, and as she still remains firm in her intentions, and is encouraged in them by her mother and sister, the rabbi has at last consented and will receive her into his congregation next Saturday morning at 10 o'clock upon open confession of faith. Mrs. Victor was born in Oswego, N. Y., in 1857 of Lutheran parentage and came to Chicago in 1880. Three years later she was married to Solomon Victor, belonging to Rabbi Messing's congregation. Her husband died last April.

Charleston News and Courier (Charleston, South Carolina), 26 dec 1900, p. 5: **TO JOIN THE JEWISH CHURCH. Why a Protestant Widow in Chicago Changes her Religion.** (From the Chicago Times-Herald. December 18.) Mrs. Louise Victor, 2727 Vincennes avenue, widow of Solomon Victor, and hitherto a believer in the Protestant faith, will become a proselyte in the Jewish belief by open confession next Saturday at the Temple B'nai Sholom, corner of 26th street and Indiana avenue. The admission of Mrs. Victor into the faith of her late husband was for a long time refused by Rabbi Messing of Temple B'nai Sholom, who feared she would suffer from prejudice that might be aroused by her action. Her request was finally granted upon the extraordinary plea that the applicant feared, if she failed to gain admission to his faith, she would be separated from her husband after her death. So great was her love for him, it was represented to the rabbi by her friend, Mrs. Kahn, of 2727 Vincennes avenue, with whom she has her home, that rejection by the rabbi would doom her to perpetual misery in life and the dread of spiritual isolation thereafter. Rabbi Messing decided to give her two months to consider the matter, and, as she still remains firm in her intentions, and is encouraged in them by her mother and sister, the rabbi has at last consented, and will received her into his congregation next Saturday morning at 10 o'clock upon open confession of faith. Mrs. Victor was born in Oswego, N. Y., in 1857, of

Lutheran parentage, and came to Chicago in 1880. Three years later she was married to Solomon Victor, belonging to Rabbi Messing's congregation. Her husband died last April.

Wichita Daily Eagle (Wichita, Kansas), 26 dec 1900, p. 2: **BAPTIZED INTO JUDAISM. Mrs. Louise Victor Becomes a Jewess at Chicago.** Chicago, Dec. 25.¹ –As Rabbi A. J. Messing, of the B’nai Sholom Temple, stood this morning in the pulpit with upraised hands, Mrs. Louise Victor, draped heavily in mourning, stood before the altar and took the oath by which she hopes to rejoin her dead husband in the next world. “In the presence of Almighty God, I, Louise Victor, do promise and swear to live and to die as a Jewess, and with my last breath I will proclaim the unity of God with the word so holy to the Jews: Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is One.” Before the beginning of the ceremony Rabbi Messing said: “It is no wonder to me that Mrs. Victor’s dead husband impressed his wife with a love for Judaism. He was a noble character, and I know this from a lifetime acquaintance with him.” “We Jews are against proselyting” he said, “because our faith is different from Christianity, which is a missionary religion.” The Rabbi told how he had advised Mrs. Victor to remain in the Christian faith, because of the prejudices he feared among her friends and relatives. He watched her at every service weeping in sorrow for her husband. But his protests were in vain. “Is not this true?” he asked the communicant. “It is,” came the reply. Mrs. Victor answered question after question in the tenets of the Jewish faith without faltering. “It is no use,” declared the Rabbi, “you know more than many a Jew,” and he put the oath on which Mrs. Victor bases her happiness thereafter. The concluding part of the ceremony by which Mrs. Victor took her Bible name followed. “I hereby declare that you, Mrs. Louise Victor, are now received in our midst as a Jewess, and as it is customary that proselytes take a new name, and you want to be known as Ruth, then that shall be your name, and as Ruth said of her husband, so shall you: “Thy God is my God and thy people are my people.”

The Inter Ocean (Chicago, Illinois), 23 dec 1900, p. 19: **JOINS JEWISH FAITH. Mrs. Victor Seeks to Insure Reunion with Dead Husband. HAD BEEN LUTHERAN. Ceremony of Conversion Performed by Rabbi Messing. Woman Professes Belief in Judasim at Altar in B’nai Sholom Temple.** Influenced by the belief that such a step was necessary to insure reunion with her dead husband, Mrs. Louise Victor, No. 3737 Vincennes avenue, yesterday formally announced herself a convert to Judaism and was received into the Jewish church. The ceremony which made Mrs. Victor a Jewess took place at the close of the regular services yesterday morning at the Temple B’nai Sholom, Twenty-sixth street and Indiana avenue. It was impressive and was witnessed by a large congregation. At the conclusion of a sermon on the theme of “Seeking After Light” Rabbi A. J. Messing said: “There is a soul among us who is also seeking more light. For seventeen years she was married to a Jewish husband, and his character was such as to inspire her with a love of Judaism, although she had always been a Christian. Last April he died, and she decided to become a Jewess, believing that reunion with her husband after death would thus be made more certain.” **Firm in Her Determination.** “It is well known that we Jews are against proselyting. We believe that paradise is open to all and that God does not ask with what forms we serve him. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man form the essence of the Jewish faith. Therefore we do not

¹ The date should be Saturday, December 22, 1900.

want you to change your religion. What does it matter? So I argued with this lady for nearly a year, and pointed out to her that if she remained a Christian she would retain the affection and respect of her relatives and friends, while if she became a Jewess she might find even here in Chicago—in some streets of this city—little children running after her and crying ‘Sheeney’ and ‘Christ-killer’. But she was determined, and now you will have to witness her change of faith from Christianity to Judaism. To me it is no change at all. All who are Unitarians in faith are really Jews, and those of other sects who do not believe in the doctrine of the trinity are also Jews.” Rabbi Messing then requested the proselyte to come forward, and she did so, accompanied by Mrs. Kahn, with whom Mrs. Victor makes her home. The rabbi asked Mrs. Victor a number of questions relative to her determination to enter the Jewish faith, and intended to bring out her knowledge of Jewish principles and establish clearly the fact that no effort had been made to induce her to adopt such a course. Mrs. Kahn testified to her friend’s anxiety about the matter of reunion with her husband in the future state, and the convert reiterated her earnest wish to enter the Jewish fold. **Given a Biblical Name.** “Do you intend with all your heart and soul to remain strong in the Jewish faith until the last moment of your life?” Mrs. Victor was asked. The proselyte answered in the affirmative, and the rabbi administered to her a solemn oath to that effect. Then, after alluding in touching terms to Mrs. Victor’s love for her husband, Rabbi Messing closed the ceremony by declaring: “I publicly declare you received into our midst as a Jewess, and as it is the custom for the proselyte to take a Biblical name to commemorate the day, I hereby name you Ruth.” Mrs. Victor is a native of Oswego, N. Y. She came to Chicago in 1880, and in 1883 was married to Solomon Victor, a member of Rabbi Messing’s congregation, who died last April. Mrs. Victor comes from a Lutheran family. After her husband’s death she became oppressed with the fear that unless she died in the Jewish faith her soul might not find that of her husband in the world to come.

San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco, California), 23 dec 1900, p. 1: **CHANGES HER FAITH TO JOIN HER DEAD HUSBAND. Solemn Ceremony by Which a Chicago Woman Adopted the Jewish Creed.** CHICAGO, December 22.—As Rabbi A. J. Messing of B’nai Sholom Temple stood to-day in the pulpit with upraised hands Mrs. Louise Victor, draped heavily in mourning, stood before the altar and took the oath by which she hopes to rejoin her husband in the next world. “In the presence of Almighty God, I, Louise Victor, to promise and swear to live and to die as a Jewess, and with my last breath will I proclaim the unity of God, with the words so holy to the Jews: “Schema jisroel adoinay alohaina adoinay echod.”² The oath was solemnly recited by the minister and repeated in a voice quivering with emotion by the proselyte. Her friend, Mrs. Kahn, stood beside her, and the temple was crowded with worshipers, who followed every phase of the ceremony with intense interest. The concluding part of the ordination, by which Mrs. Victor took her Bible name, followed: “I hereby declare that you, Mrs. Louise Victor, are now received in our midst as Jewess, and as it is customary that proselytes take a new name, and you want to be known as Ruth, then Ruth shall be your name, and as Ruth said of her people, so shall you: “Thy God is my God, and thy people are my people.”

² This is often written *Schema Jisrael, Adonai elohenu, Adonai echad* (transliteration from the Sephardic tradition). The text in the newspaper article is closer to the Ashkenazi tradition. It will be noted that the article where this appears closely follows the one published in the *Wichita Daily Eagle*, in which the same creed appears in English.

Indianapolis News (Indianapolis, Indiana), 22 dec 1900, p. 19: **A Woman's Strange Belief.**

Influenced by a temperament naturally religious, and by the fear that after death her soul will not meet that of her husband, who died last April, Mrs. Louise Victor, of Chicago, has adopted the Jewish faith. So strong was her determination that it overcame the opposition of Rabbi Dr. A. J. Messing, of the congregation of the Temple of B'nai Sholom, into which she has just been



received. For a time Rabbi Messing positively refused to admit her into the faith, and she urged him so insistently and often that he ordered the janitor to keep her away from his study. She feared that if she died out of the Jewish faith, she and her husband would not meet in the world to come, and dread of this kept her in a state of perpetual misery. He reluctantly consented, and the ceremony took place, although against his wishes, and he so informed the audience. "The change of faith is the first of its kind I have ever met with," said Rabbi Messing, "and I see no reason for it. We do not proselyte, and Mrs. Victor, according to her own faith, stands as good a chance of meeting her husband after death if she remains a Lutheran."

Des Moines Daily News (Des Moines, Iowa), 26 dec 1900: **WOMAN TAKES JEWISH OATH. Mrs. Louise Victor Joins the Hebrew Faith at B'nai Sholom.** CHICAGO, Dec. 26.—Mrs. Louise Victor took the oath in B'nai Sholom Temple that made her a Jewess. The ceremony was conducted by Rabbi A. J. Messing in the presence of a great congregation. The only reason for the change in faith was because the late Mr. Victor was a Hebrew, and his widow wished to honor his memory by becoming one of the members of the sect to which he belonged. In addition to renouncing the Christian faith, Mrs. Victor also took the name of Ruth. In his address before the ceremony the rabbi disclaimed any appeal on his part of any other person, so far as he knew, to proselyte Mrs. Victor. Her action, he said, was voluntary.

Carolina Mascot (Statesville, North Carolina), 03 jan 1901: **A Gentile Woman Joins the Jewish Church.** Chicago Dispatch, 28th. Mrs. Louise Victor, 3,737 Vincennes avenue, widow of Solomon Victor, and hitherto a believer in the Protestant faith, will become a proselyte to the Jewish belief by open confession next Saturday at the Temple B'nai Sholom, corner of Twenty-sixth street and Indiana avenue. The admission of Mrs. Victor into the faith of her late husband was for a long time refused by Rabbi Messing, of Temple B'nai Sholom, who feared she would suffer from prejudice that might be aroused over her action. Her request was finally granted upon the extraordinary plea that the applicant feared, if she failed to gain admission to his faith,

she would be separated from her husband after her death. So great was her love for him, it was represented to the rabbi by her friend, Mrs. Kahn, of 3,737 Vincennes avenue, which whom she has her home, that rejection by the rabbi would doom her to perpetual misery in life and the dread of spiritual isolation thereafter. Rabbi Messing decided to give her two months to consider the matter, and, as she still remains firm in her intentions, and is encouraged in them by her mother and sister, the rabbi has at last consented, and will received her into his congregation next Saturday morning at 10 o'clock upon open confession of faith. Mrs. Victor was born in Oswego, N. Y., in 1857, of Lutheran parentage, and came to Chicago in 1880. Three years later she was married to Solomon Victor, belonging to Rabbi Messing's congregation. Her husband died last April.

Evening Herald (Syracuse, New York), December 23, 1900 ? (fultonhistory.com, file **Syracuse NY Evening Herald 1901 - 5622.pdf**, date at the top of the digitized page is illegible):

CHANGED HER FAITH. Former Oswego Protestant Woman Becomes a Jewess.

OSWEGO, Dec. 22. – Mrs. Louise Victor of Chicago, widow of Solomon Victor, hitherto a Protestant, has become a proselyte to the Jewish belief by open confession to-day in Chicago at the Temple B'nai Solon. The admission of Mrs. Victor into the faith of her late husband was for a long time refused by Rabbi Messing of Temple B'nai Sholon, who feared she would suffer from prejudice that might be aroused by her action. Her request was finally granted upon the extraordinary plea that the applicant feared, if she failed to gain admission to his faith, she would be separated from her husband after her death. So great was her love for him, it was represented to the rabbi by her friend Mrs. Kahn, of No. 3,737 Vincennes avenue, with whom she has her home, that rejection by the rabbi would doom her to perpetual misery in life and the dread of spiritual isolation thereafter. Rabbi Messing decided to give her two months to consider the matter, and, as she remained firm in her intentions, and was encouraged in them by her mother and sister, the rabbi at last consented, and received her into his congregation this morning at 10 o'clock upon open confession of faith. Mrs. Victor was born in Oswego in 1857, of Lutheran parentage, and went to Chicago in 1880. Three years later she was married to Solomon Victor, belonging to Rabbi Messing's congregation. Her husband died last April.